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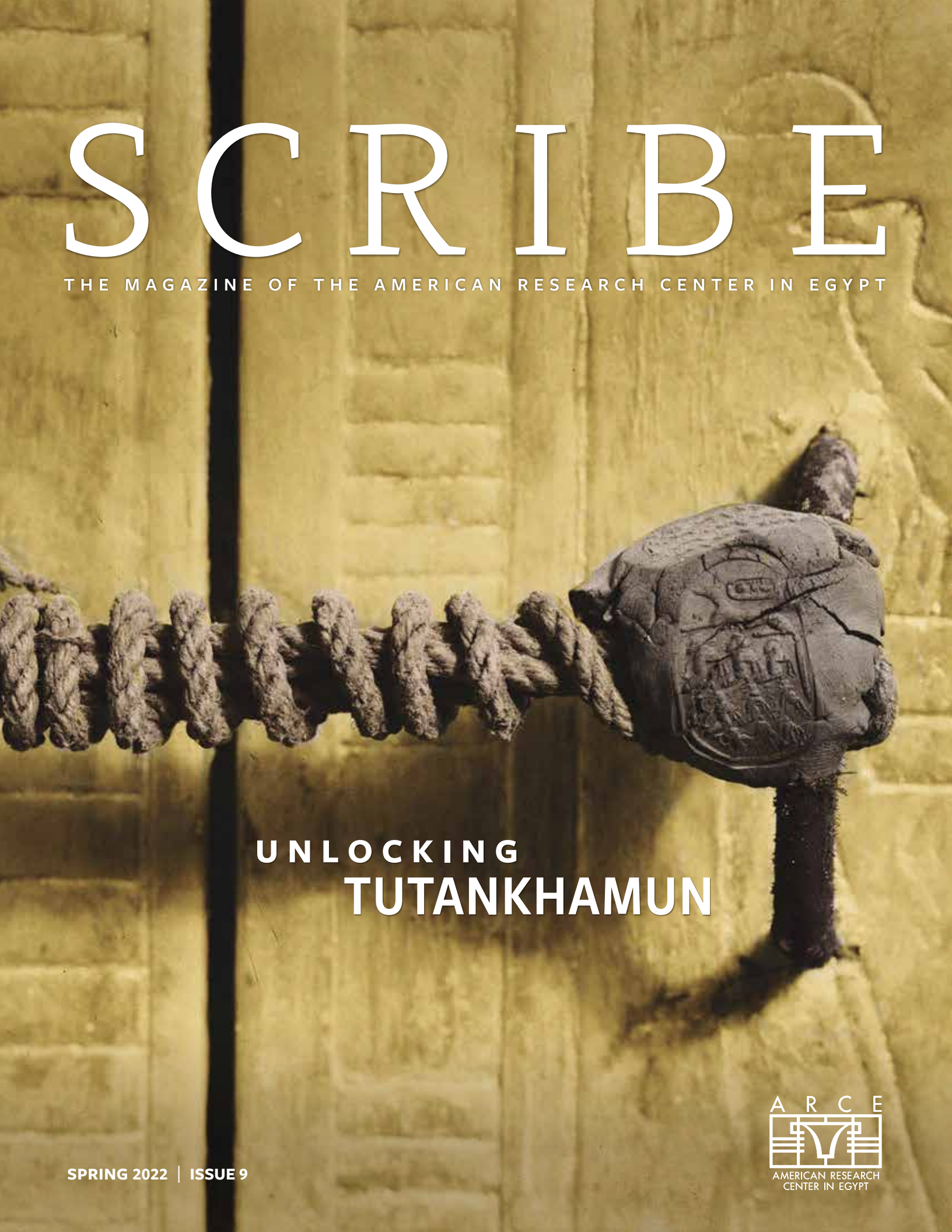

UNLOCKING TUTANKHAMUN

SPRING 2022 | ISSUE 9

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Previous filling and attempts at stabilizing fragile plaster surfaces in KV 62

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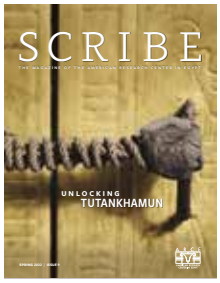

Unbroken seal and cord on the third shrine; Burton P0631 (colorized)

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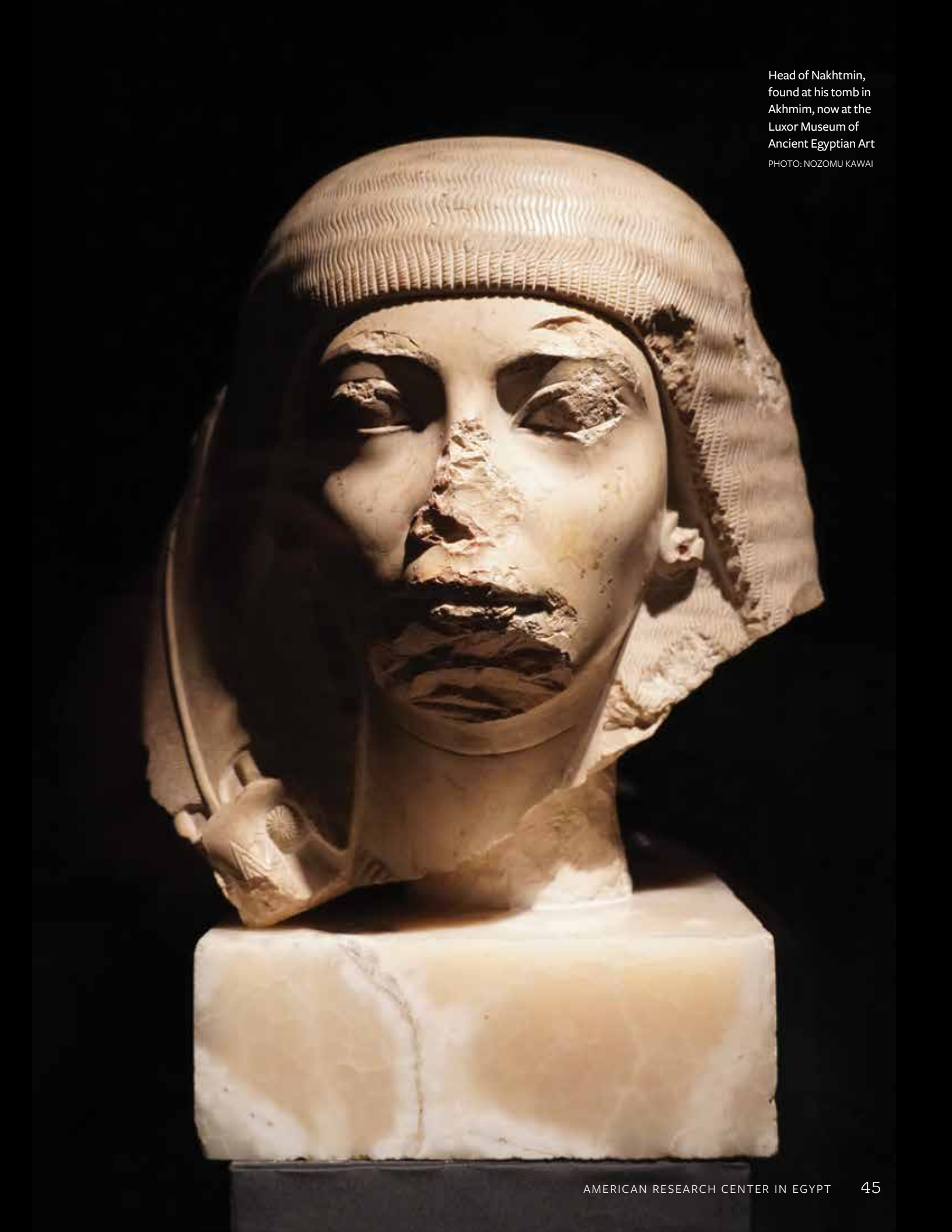
The Time of Tutankhamun

What New Evidence Reveals

BY NOZOMU KAWAI, KANAZAWA UNIVERSITY

In spite of Tutankhamun's tomb – discovered 100 years ago this year – being the richest ever found in Egypt, his reign has been obscured due to the erasure of his memory by later kings and the dearth of hard evidence. He was long considered an unimportant king and his reign was largely disregarded due to its short duration of less than a decade. However, considerable evidence to the contrary is available nowadays thanks to recent archaeological excavations, epigraphic studies in the temples and tombs, and meticulous research in museums around the world. This article aims to introduce the current understanding of Tutankhamun and his time utilizing new evidence about the king and his court officials.



Head of Nakhtmin, found at his tomb in Akhmim, now at the Luxor Museum of Ancient Egyptian Art

PHOTO: NOZOMU KAWAI

The end of the Amarna Period and Tutankhaten

Tutankhaten was clearly recognized publicly as a prince during Akhenaten's reign; his name was mentioned and images of him were represented in some royal monuments at Amarna. For this reason, Tutankhaten, literally "The living image of Aten," might have been the "crown prince" of Akhenaten, who likely regarded him as his legitimate successor. However, there was another male who seems to have been regarded as Akhenaten's successor: Smenkhkare Djeserukheperu. Smenkhkare appears to have shared the throne with Akhenaten late in his reign as co-regent. Akhenaten's eldest daughter, Meritaten, became Smenkhkara's "Great Royal Wife." Smenkhkare's reign was very short, probably less than a year, as suggested by the year date found on hieratic jar dockets bearing his name. After Smenkhkare's death Akhenaten's chief queen, Nefertiti, apparently assumed the role of his co-regent as female ruler Neferneferuaten with the epithet "beneficial for her husband," which was identified by Marc Gabolde. Gabolde and some other scholars believe that Neferneferuaten was Meritaten. When the co-regency of Neferneferuaten and Akhenaten ended, the political situation may well have descended into chaos in the court at Amarna. Some Egyptologists and Hittitologists are convinced that the queen who ruled before Tutankhamun's accession was the widowed queen known to have dispatched a letter to King Shuppiluliuma, asking him to send one of his princes to Egypt to share the throne with her. If this affair happened after Akhenaten's death, the widowed queen is either equated with Nefertiti or Meritaten. Other scholars prefer to date this affair after Tutankhamun's death, which will be discussed towards the end of this article.

After Akhenaten's demise, Neferneferuaten assumed sole reign, which probably lasted for about two years. A graffito written by a certain Pawah in the tomb of Pairy (TT 139) suggests that by Year 3 of Neferneferuaten the return to orthodoxy was initiated, although she maintained the cult of Aten and the capital at Amarna. Presumably, the movement to restore the traditional religion was stipulated after the death of Akhenaten, who considered himself as the sole master for the cult of Aten. The fact that a number of objects found in Tutankhamun's tomb had been made for the burial of Neferneferuaten, adapted and reinscribed for Tutankhamun's use, implies that Tutankhaten and his entourage did not want to recognize the preceding reign. Neferneferaten had assumed sole reign despite the fact that Tutankhaten, the crown prince, was the legitimate successor. Instead of giving up her kingship to a young boy, Neferneferuaten may have wished to continue her sole rule not only because she was already reigning, but also because Tutankhaten was just a boy between five and 10 years old. Although Neferneferuaten began restoring the cults of Amun and other deities she also simultaneously maintained the cult of Aten at Amarna, resulting in a dissatisfied faction of officials and priests who advocated a quick return to orthodoxy. When Neferneferuaten's reign ended, probably after about three years, Tutankhaten and Akhenaten's third daughter Ankhesenpaaten were the only surviving members of the Amarna royal family.

ABOVE: A stela of Tutankhaten worshipping Amun and Mut

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BELOW: Back of the Golden Throne of Tutankhaten/Tutankhamun, showing the king and queen under Aten

PHOTO: NOZOMU KAWAI, COURTESY OF THE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO

The Return to Orthodoxy

Tutankhaten likely ascended to the throne at Memphis at around the age of eight. He seems to have abandoned Akhetaten (the capital created by Akhenaten) immediately as he did not leave any royal monument

ABOVE: An applique from Tutankhamun's chariot, showing Tutankhamun wearing both Upper and Lower Egyptian crowns with the name of both Tutankhaten and Tutankhamun

PHOTO: NOZOMU KAWAI, COURTESY OF THE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO

there. Tutankhaten worshipped Amun and other traditional deities since the movement back towards orthodoxy had already been initiated under Neferneferuaten, while continuing to worship Aten – at the beginning of his reign at least – as indicated by a depiction of the god on Tutankhamun's golden throne. It has been suggested that Tutankhaten and Ankhesenpaaten changed their names to Tutankhamun and Ankhesenamun respectively at the time of the removal of the capital to Memphis. I propose, however, that early in his reign, the king had two names simultaneously, Tutankhaten and Tutankhamun, worshipping two national gods, Amun and Aten, at the same time for a very short period. The alteration of his name was not very sudden; instead, there was a coexistence of two names implying a compromise between the Aten and Amen cults. Tutankhamun firmly established Thebes again as the center of the state religion and vigorously carried out a restoration program throughout the country at the same time. Finally, the king changed his name to Tutankhamun.

Tutankhamun's Restoration Stela provides us with information on the policies of the early part of Tutankhamun's reign. Although some scholars suggest that the decree was issued in Tutankhamun's Year 1, it is more likely that the Restoration Stela documents the institutionalization of the restoration program, describing what had already been affected to the benefit of the traditional cults, as Marianne Eaton-Krauss rightly suggested. On this stela, Tutankhamun described the time before his accession to the throne as a phase when the gods were absent, the result of which was a human, political, and religious catastrophe, without naming the concrete reasons that supposedly led

The Restoration Stela of Tutankhamun

PHOTO: NOZOMU KAWAI, COURTESY OF THE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO

Egypt into this enormous crisis. According to the stela, Tutankhamun's first imperative was the restoration and re-opening of the temples of the traditional cults throughout Egypt, accompanied by amends to the ravaged temples. First, he embellished the divine statues of Amun and other traditional gods, which were ignored or destroyed during Akhenaten's reign. Second, the king installed the children of influential local officials in the priesthood, across the ranks. Third, he increased the revenue of the temples and cities, including private property. In other words, the properties owned by the king and Aten temples during the Amarna period were redirected to the temples of the traditional cults and local cities. Fourth, male and female servants and singers were consecrated and protected from all standard requisition of the temple property by the state.

Tutankhamun performing a ritual for Amun on a wall of the Colonnade Hall, Luxor Temple

PHOTO: NOZOMU KAWAI

Although Neferneferuaten reasserted Amun's prominent position at his cult center in Thebes, the actual physical restoration activities seem to have been initiated in Tutankhamun's reign. Despite its brevity, Tutankhamun's reign was marked by a significant increase in artistic and architectural activities throughout Egypt. While it is impossible to know the full extent of Tutankhamun's restoration and building activities, the evidence implies that Tutankhamun's restoration and reactivation of temples occurred on a large scale and spanned from the Delta to Upper Nubia. Tutankhamun himself was often depicted presenting a bundle of lotus flowers to Amun and other traditional deities, which was the central public icon of Tutankhamun's restoration of orthodoxy.

In the Delta, Tutankhamun recorded his activities in the temples at Tjaru, Avaris, Bubastis, and Letopolis, suggesting that he re-opened the temples of local deities in these regions. Since Tutankhamun moved the capital to Memphis from Amarna, vital building activities can be observed in the Memphite area. In Heliopolis, Tutankhamun built a chapel associated with the cult of the Theban gods Amun and Khonsu, who dwell in the House of Re, reaffirming the connection between Re and Amun since Heliopolis was a cult center of Aten during Akhenaten's reign. The king built his rest house in front of the Great Sphinx at Giza, which created a close association with Sphinx itself – the inscription on the door lintel describes him as "beloved of Houron." Thus, Tutankhamun made an effort to honor Re-Horakhty and Horemakhet, the Heliopolitan deities. It is likely that he did this not only to restore the cult of the gods, but also to connect himself with the line of the 18th Dynasty since these deities were favored by Amenhotep II and Thutmose IV. In Memphis and Saqqara, Tutankhamun decorated the Temple of Ptah and resumed the Apis burial, which was initiated during Amenhotep III's reign and abandoned under Akhenaten.

Inarguably though, Tutankhamun's most impressive restoration work was undertaken in Thebes. He continued the unfinished work of Amenhotep III's building projects, neglected by Akhenaten. By resuming the building program of Amenhotep III, Tutankhamun aimed to legitimize himself as the successor of the last orthodox king before Akhenaten. For example, Tutankhamun decorated the Colonnade Hall of Luxor Temple, which was left unfinished and neglected by Akhenaten. On the scene of the Opet Festival, Amenhotep III is represented as the statue of a deified and deceased former king on each divine barque of the procession conducted by Tutankhamun. This suggests that Tutankhamun's association with Amenhotep III

Statues of Tutankhamun, once placed under the chins of the criosphinxes between the Tenth Pylon and the Precinct of Mut, Karnak

PHOTO: NOZOMU KAWAI, COURTESY OF THE EGYPTIAN MUSEUM, CAIRO

was displayed publicly during the festival as political propaganda, likely strengthening his legitimacy as a successor of the orthodoxy. At Karnak, Tutankhamun seems to have depicted his smaller figure behind Amenhotep III's figure on the north tower of the Third Pylon. Eaton-Krauss and William Murnane have also pointed out that the construction of the Tenth Pylon at Karnak, initiated by Amenhotep III, was probably resumed under Tutankhamun; they have also argued that Tutankhamun was the first king to dismantle Akhenaten's monument in Karnak, since the talatat blocks from Akhenaten's structure at Karnak were used as fill in the pylon during the post-Amarna period.

My personal observations of Tutankhamun's monument in Karnak reveal that he often focused his activities in the key areas of the temple and the main processional ways. In front of the Third Pylon, which was probably the first main gate of Karnak Temple at that time, at least two stelae, including the famous Restoration Stela, were installed. The figures of Amun, expunged by the agents of Akhenaten, were restored along the main axis. On the wall of the east face of the Sixth Pylon, he left three renewal formulae for Amun. In the Akhmenu, Tutankhamun erected quartzite colossi of Amun and Amunet, which were later moved in front of the Sixth Pylon. On the other main axis, Tutankhamun similarly installed stelae in front of the Seventh Pylon. On the Eighth Pylon, the figures of Amun and other deities seem to have been restored by Tutankhamun. The edifice of Amenhotep II was restored and a stela seems to have been erected in this forecourt. The sphinxes between the Tenth Pylon and the Precinct of Mut were transformed from heads showing Akhenaten and Nefertiti into those of criosphinxes, which possess small statues of Tutankhamun under their chins. Presumably, some duplication of the Restoration Stela was erected in front of one of the main gates of the Karnak Temple Complex. Tutankhamun appears to have begun building his memorial temple at Karnak. However, this monument was apparently left unfinished in its initial stages. Ay went on to complete the temple as a dual memorial temple to propagate his association with Tutankhamun and legitimize him as the successor. Scenes in the temple show several rituals to Amun performed by Tutankhamun accompanied by the official, Ay, behind him. Most of the blocks of this temple were reused as fill of the Second and Ninth Pylons at Karnak by Horemheb.

Additionally, numerous statues of Amun in various sizes were constructed and restored particularly in Thebes during Tutankhamun's reign, which were recently published by Eaton-Krauss. Some of them possess a smaller figure of the king, sometimes being protected by Amun or represented as the High Priest of Amun. Others show Amun with a boy's face, showing the assimilation of Tutankhamun with Amun. These statues were probably placed to show Tutankhamun as the "Living image of Amun" – literally, his name. On the west bank of Thebes, Tutankhamun also restored the images of Amun in the memorial temple of Amenhotep III and left a renewal formula.

Amun and Amunet with features of Tutankhamun, Karnak Temple

PHOTO: NOZOMU KAWAI

The evidence of Tutankhamun's physical restoration activities can be further observed at other Upper Egyptian temples, including plastering and re-carving over the damaged figures of Amun, while leaving the images of other deities generally unchanged. Sometime the attribution of the work is clear due to the distinctive features of Tutankhamun's figure, even though he did not leave renewal inscriptions. In Nubia, Tutankhamun erected two temples in Faras and Kawa. In Faras, the temple was called "Pacifying the gods," the same as his Golden Horus name. There, Tutankhamun was worshipped during his lifetime, as was Amenhotep III in Soleb. Tutankhamun also left his restoration formula on a recumbent lion statue in the temple at Soleb.

The leading figure in Tutankhamun's restoration program must have been none other than the regent Horemheb. A scribal statue of Horemheb from Karnak mentions that he had restored the temple of Amun at Karnak and magnified Thebes from its devastated situation – without mentioning his king. However, the actual restoration works of the temples of the traditional gods and the production of divine statues would have been implemented by the Treasury of the government. Meryre, who was most probably Meryre II under Akhenaten, became the Overseer of Treasury under Tutankhamun. His block statue describes how the king charged him with assessing the entire land in order to institute divine offerings for the traditional gods. By Year 8 of Tutankhamun, this position was replaced by Maya, who was probably named as May during Akhenaten's reign. A stela mentions a decree of Tutankhamun in Year 8, stating that like his predecessor Meryre, Maya was charged with levying tax in order to institute the divine offerings to all the gods of Egypt from Elephantine to the Delta. Both decrees of Tutankhamun for Meryre and Maya suggest that the Overseer of the Treasury was in charge of reestablishing endowments to the temples whose finances had been redirected by Akhenaten. This great revision of the economy was undertaken throughout Tutankhamun's reign.

Tutankhamun's Court

As previously mentioned, Tutankhamun ascended to the throne at around eight years old – or was at least was no older than 10. He could have ruled the country alone with the support of some senior officials and courtiers (as Amenhotep III did), however, power instead passed into the hands of influential officials. During the reign of Tutankhamun, a pattern emerged wherein high officials took on royal prerogatives. Ay's

participation in royal cultic ritual is one example. Generalissimo Horemheb as the regent, in his separate sphere, takes on similarly royal attributes by depicting himself as the victorious military leader and an excellent legislator, which are supposed to have been significant roles of the king. Even Maya, Overseer of the Treasury, who played an important role in the administration, adopted epithets normally reserved for royalty. The appearance of royal iconography, epithets, and powers among influential high officials suggests that, practically speaking, the traditional royal functions within the administration and court had similarly been delegated to these three men. Mostly, the young king seems to have been operating in the shadow of these individuals.

Among these three men, Generalissimo Horemheb gained the most powerful political position. Horemheb's career started as a general under Akhenaten, and he later emerged as commander-in-chief of the Egyptian armed forces. Evidently, he took advantage of the political instability of the country after Akhenaten's death and was a driving force for the return to orthodoxy. Not only was Horemheb the military commander but he also dominated all other branches of the administration of the country. As the regent of the king he outranked two viziers who would have traditionally served as prime ministers under the king. He was the political leader under Tutankhamun as his most prominent title, "Hereditary Prince," suggests and inarguably acted as the commander of the government on behalf of the boy king. Towards the end of his private career, Horemheb consciously presented himself as a wise civil administrator rather

A relief block from Tutankhamun's memorial temple at Karnak, showing the king presenting a bundle of lotus flowers to Amun, now at the Open air Museum at Karnak

PHOTO: NOZOMU KAWAI

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LEFT: The dyad of Maya and his wife Merit from the tomb of Maya at Saqqara, now at the National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden

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RIGHT: Tutankhamun's entourage depicted behind his throne, two leading men before two viziers must be Horemheb and Ay, at the tomb of Maia, the wet-nurse of Tutankhamun, at Saqqara

PHOTO: NOZOMU KAWAI

than a military man, which indicates that he intended to display his capability as a ruler.

Ay, on the other hand, was the closest courtier to the king. He and his wife, Ty, had served the royal family since Akhenaten's reign, even when the new royal couple was born. Although Ay did not retain political power as an administrator during most of Tutankhamun's reign, he was the most influential private advisor to the king. In any case, both Horemheb and Ay outranked the two would-be prime ministerial viziers and were even depicted immediately behind the king in the tomb of Tutankhamun's wet-nurse Maia at Saqqara.

As previously stated, the Restoration Stela describes how the king installed the children of influential local officials in the priesthood from high ranks to low ranks. Members of these important families occupied a number of significant positions in both civil administration and religious administration from Tutankhamun's reign onwards. There were several influential families in Upper Egypt that occupied these important offices. For example, the strong influence of the people from Akhmim, which developed in Amenhotep III's reign, persisted under Tutankhamun. Ay and Senqed were the most influential among them and played an important role at the court as advisors or nurses of the king, while Nakhtmin functioned as one of the generals who eventually became the crown prince under Ay. A certain Ay, whose father was a god's father of Mut, Nakhtmin, and whose mother was a sister of Ay's wife, Ty, was probably appointed as the second prophet of Amun under Tutankhamun. Taemwajsy, likely a descendant of Yuya and Tjuya from Akhmim, had very influential power in Nubia as the "Great one of the Musical Performers of Amun," a position that was probably inherited from Tjuya, as well as the "Great one of the Musical Performers of Nebkheperure" for the cult of the living deified king Tutankhamun. She married Khaemwaset, Troop commander of Kush, and later married Amenhotep Huy, viceroy of Kush, and kept her influence in the temples at Faras and Kawa.

Furthermore, the High Priest of Amun, Parennefer/Wennefer, who originated from Thinis in the Coptos area, also functioned as the High Priest of Onuris at Thinis and his brother, Minmose, was the High Priest of Min and Isis at Coptos. Parennnefer/Wennefer's son, Hori, was appointed as the High Priest of Mut under Tutankhamun and later inherited his father's title as the High Priest of Onuris. Much like the family from Akhmim, the members of this family occupied several important positions throughout the 19th Dynasty, especially during Ramses II's reign. The family of the vizier Usermontu also seem to have been influential in the Armant area. His brother, Huy, was a priest of Montu at Armant. Usermontu's

subordinate, Hatiay, was the High Priest of Montu, Sobek, Anubis, and Khonsu.

The End of Tutankhamun's Reign and Aftermath

The events surrounding Tutankhamun's death remain far from clear. The latest scientific study of Tutankhamun's mummy has revealed that he died around the age of 18 or 19 – probably unexpectedly in his Year 9 or 10. Tutankhamun was eventually buried in a small tomb in the Valley of the Kings that was likely originally intended as a private tomb, although his tomb seems to have been prepared in the western Valley of the Kings. His tomb was also prepared in a hurry, as the paintings in the burial chamber indicate. Ay was responsible for Tutankhamun's funeral as his successor, representing himself as Pharaoh in priestly regalia while performing the Opening of the Mouth ritual on Tutankhamun's mummy .

At that time, Egypt was engaged in military skirmishes with the Hittites, who were invading the northern border of the Egyptian empire. While there is no Egyptian source stating the date of Tutankhamun's death, a Hittite source seems to provide information on this event. According to a Hittite document, it would seem that the death of Nipukhururiya (in Egyptian, "Nebkheperure," Tutankhamun's throne name) and an Egyptian defeat at Amka by the Hittites occurred at approximately the same time. Since there was no offspring to succeed Tutankhamun as king, it is possible that the aforementioned widowed queen who asked the Hittite king Shuppiluliuma for a son who could marry her and become king of Egypt was actually Ankhesenamun. This extraordinary plan failed, however, since Shuppiluliuma's son Zannanza was murdered on his way to Egypt. The result was that the war with the Hittities continued. Therefore, Ankhesenamun likely sought to establish a co-regency with Ay, who eventually did ascend to the throne. For unknown reasons, Ankhesenamun then disappeared from the scene. Horemheb became less visible under Ay, who made a conscious effort to prevent Horemheb from succeeding to the throne by appointing Nakhtmin as "King's Son," "Hereditary Prince," and "Generalissimo." Thus, Nakhmin was elevated to a higher position than Horemheb, although he was previously Horemheb's subordinate under Tutankhamun. Horemheb would finally ascend to the throne after Ay's demise and enacted a damnatio memoriae against Ay and Nakhtmin. Ultimately, Tutankhamun's memory was largely erased by Horemheb in order to legitimate his succession as the new king – and the main reason why Tutankhamun was relatively unknown until the British archaeologist Howard Carter discovered his tomb in 1922!

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